



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF AGING  
555 Walnut Street, 5th Floor  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA  
17101-1919

DEPUTY SECRETARY OF AGING

September 21, 2005

Ms. Moya Thompson  
Director for Outreach Coordination  
2005 White House Conference on Aging  
4350 East West Highway, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Ms. Thompson: *Moya*

On June 2, 2005, the Cultural Diversity Advisory Committee of the Pennsylvania Department of Aging held a meeting that was designated as an "Independent Aging Agenda Event" under guidelines established by the 2005 White House Conference on Aging. We are pleased to submit the enclosed report of the proceedings of that meeting.

The report complies with the guidelines outlined by the 2005 White House Conference on Aging in that they are clear, concise and brief. The recommendations mainly involve issues regarding diversity and aging, as the main purpose of the Diversity Advisory Committee is to assist in guiding the Pennsylvania Department of Aging in becoming a more diverse organization.

We look forward to participation in the National 2005 White House Conference on Aging to be held in December. In the interim, please accept the enclosed report as part of our input into this most important gathering.

Sincerely,

William Johnston-Walsh  
Deputy Secretary

Enclosure

*Hope to see  
you face-to-face  
one of these  
days.*

## Post-Event Summary Report

Name of Event: PA Department of Aging Cultural Diversity Advisory Committee

Date of Event: June 2, 2005

Location of Event: PA Department of Aging, 555 Walnut Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101

Number of Persons attending: 25

Sponsoring Organization(s): PA Department of Aging

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Please follow this format for each priority area, with the most important listed first. Please ensure that your organization's name and contact information is provided at the bottom of each page submitted.

Priority Issue #1: Cultural Competency and Access to Services in the Aging Network

Most experts in the field of aging now agree that older persons are better served in a community-based system that understands and values the cultural background of individuals. As Pennsylvania's older population becomes increasingly diverse, as well as the nation's elderly population, the aging network must re-examine the ways in which it publicizes and delivers services and programs, to ensure cultural inclusion and linguistically appropriate services and supports. Research has shown that many culturally diverse older persons have needs that are more acute than the population as a whole. As the diverse population grows, our system, which is also undergoing rapid change, must respond effectively. "Cultural inclusion" is a term gaining increased acceptance when referring to efforts that reach out to or include people of diverse cultures. The goal of cultural inclusion challenges Pennsylvania and the nation to meet the needs of a diverse population in terms of race, ethnicity and sexual preference.

Barriers:

- ✗ Lack of translated materials and interpretation services for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) consumers.
- ✗ Access to federal, state and local services available for LEP consumers is difficult, if not impossible, because of language and cultural barriers.

- ✗ Lack of priority and consistent support for culturally competent training in the aging network.

Proposed Solution(s): (list suggested solutions to the challenges described above.)

- ⊕ Cultural Diversity should be a quality of life issue and be incorporated in lifelong learning education for future generations.
- ⊕ A national program that encourages bilingual students to assist AAAs to translate, as well as a national oversight committee for diversity.
- ⊕ Look at ways to strengthen community partnerships and interfaith coalitions.
- ⊕ Adjust cultural needs accordingly, in light of the strong shift in ethnic and racial demographics in the next ten years.
- ⊕ Establish performance measures on CLAS (OAA State Plan on Aging).
- ⊕ Greater priority needs to be placed on the development of systems that are family centered, family focused and culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- ⊕ The need to have more racial and ethnic diversity of the groups, boards and advisory councils that participate in the aging network.
- ⊕ Greater emphasis on customer choice and flexible spending to allow maximum access to diverse resources and services for culturally diverse older persons.

Priority Issue #2: Enforcement of Current Laws and Sanctions for Non-Compliance

As a matter of policy and program priorities, the Older Americans Act should uphold and take action to measure and enforce state units on Aging and AAAs to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, incorporating meaningful financial incentives for compliance with equally effective sanctions for non-compliance and as a condition for continued funding and participation. In addition, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has been attacked by advocates that claim the state and local civil rights commissions are inadequately staffed and funded, thus resulting in some office closures that many feel are a harbinger of the slow death of the civil rights agency.

Barriers:

- ✗ Lack of adequate funding and resources for enforcement agencies like the Office of Civil Rights, EEOC and state and local human relations organizations.

Proposed Solution(s): (list suggested solutions to the challenges described above.)

- ⊕ Require the AoA to establish performance measures for all state and local area plans for the adoption of mandated Title VI Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Standards.
- ⊕ Require state units on aging to set performance measures to obtain diversity in light of the fact that the OAA, Title III, requires states to target service for low-income minority elderly.

### Priority Issue #3: Funding and Incentives to Promote Cultural Diversity

While cultural competence training, education and language assistance require financial and staff resources, avoiding a costly lawsuit could finance a number of CLAS standards and activities. To accomplish many of the requirements, the dollars must follow the mandates.

#### Barriers:

- ✗ Lack of coordination and collaboration at the federal level regarding resources for states to enhance diversity.
- ✗ No funding process to encourage and support the development of leaders on the aging network.
- ✗ Inadequate funding for mandates.
- ✗ Lack of financial incentives to increase understanding and compliance of Title VI and the federal, state and county levels.

Proposed Solution(s): (list suggested solutions to the challenges described above.)

- ⊕ Federal and state policy makers should support and implement direct reimbursement for cultural competent activities, possibly through the Medicare and Medicaid programs and allow for administrative expenses.
- ⊕ A financial incentive for schools that graduate students that are bilingual.
- ⊕ Insure low income elderly are addressed and implement fees for service revenues for cultural diversity programs and services.
- ⊕ Provide the necessary and adequate funding for those agencies asked to enforce the law and serious implementation of sanctions for those in non-compliance.

#### Priority Issue #4: Cultural Competency Training and Education

Staff development is extremely important, and essential, to address cultural and linguistic competency. Values and beliefs like denial, fear and superiority all can be in conflict with the values and beliefs of those older persons that we are trying to serve. It is critical to recognize that cultural competency is a constant learning experience and that effective communication involves respect and openness for someone that has different cultural expectations and different than your own.

##### Barriers:

- ✗ Lack of funding and resources for cultural competency training and education.

Proposed Solution(s): (list suggested solutions to the challenges described above.)

- ⊕ Establish a national program that would require bilingual students to work with non-English speaking older persons.
- ⊕ Provide culturally diverse programming for older consumers and create cultural programs that work.
- ⊕ More collaboration between federal and state departments to make diversity education in all levels of education.
- ⊕ Provide financial literacy for all older persons.

#### Priority Issue #5: Minority Workforce Development and Leadership

The aging network will be faced with a growing expense of consumers, resulting in a critical need for trained caregivers and providers in the aging network; while there will also be a need to increase employment, testing, recruitment retention, etc., opportunities to hire, train and employ persons of color, bilingual and multicultural. Organizations must also invest in leadership opportunities that demonstrate the agencies' commitment to the promotion of diversity in the workplace.

##### Barriers:

- ✗ Language barriers
- ✗ Lack of leadership opportunities.
- ✗ Transportation to work sites for low income workers, especially direct care workers in long term care facilities.
- ✗ Lack of respect shown to many minorities and the inability to improve career opportunities for abatement.

Proposed Solution(s): (list suggested solutions to the challenges described above.)

- ⊕ Recognize the value of a culturally competent workforce and create more opportunities.
- ⊕ Ensure staff is culturally competent.
- ⊕ Look at model programs that encourage persons with LEP to be bilingual and provide on-the-job training opportunities.
- ⊕ Provide Day Care